

T-524

Power crabbing skiff, Smith Island type
St. Michaels, Maryland

This vessel is a 21' long deadrise crabbing skiff of a type indigenous to the Smith Island area of Chesapeake Bay. The boat was built at Smith Island, Maryland in the early 1920s as a power boat to be used for crabbing and oyster tonging. The vessel is almost flat bottomed and is powered by a single-cylinder engine inboard. This vessel is significant as being an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering. This example gains added significance as being an example of a traditional skiff type built especially for power after the introduction of the gasoline engine, although its use was exactly the same as that of the poled or pushed skiffs it was modeled on. The vessel is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-524

Magi No. 2105245733

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Power crabbing skiff, Smith Island type CBMM 75-25-1

2. Location

street & number Hill Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town St. Michaels ☐ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

street & number telephone no.: 745-2916

city, town St. Michaels state and zip code Maryland 21663

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. T-524

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This boat is a deadrise skiff measuring 21' long by 5'4" wide. She was built at Smith Island, Maryland in the early 1920s as a power boat to be used for crabbing and oyster tonging. The boat is almost flat bottomed, with a straight, almost plumb stem and a square transom stern. She is built of wood and painted white with green trim. She is powered by a single-cylinder inboard engine.

The skiff is carvel-planked, with a plank-on-edge keel and fore-and-aft bottom and deck planking. There are ten sets of full sawn frames across the bottom. The straight stem piece is scarfed to the keel, with log filler chunks extending from the stem about 2' aft. There are square posts mounted on the foredeck and at the stern as sampson posts. The rudder, steered by a yoke tiller rigged with lines reeved through blocks on the ends of the 28" yoke and on the deck, is 30" high by 20" wide.

The engine is a one-cylinder Falcon engine, housed in an engine compartment on the open deck aft. The engine compartment measures 25" high and is 20" by 20" square. It is topped with a green-painted canvas-covered hatch cover. There is a steering lever located amidships along the starboard coaming; this is rigged to the yoke tiller and rudder. The gas can is a re-used Navy gunpowder container.

There are partial decks--a small foredeck and afterdeck, and washboards with a beaded rubbing strake and a short coaming around the deck opening. At one point one of the boat's owners installed 8" high coaming to make the boat drier and capable of carrying a larger load but this has since been removed. There are some removable floorboards, painted gray, as is the inside of the boat. The hull and topsides are white with green trim on the rubbing strake, coaming, and posts.

The boat is on display at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels. It is an example of a traditional skiff type built especially for power although its use was the same as that of the poled or pushed skiffs such as the 18' Smith Island skiff also in the CBMM collection.

8. Significance

Survey No. T-524

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	Builder/Architect	Unknown
c. 1923-1925		
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D		
and/or		
Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G		
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local		

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering. This example gains added significance as being an example of a traditional skiff type built especially for power after the introduction of the gasoline engine, although its use was exactly the same as that of the poled or pushed skiffs it was modeled on.

The Chesapeake Bay crabbing skiff is an indigenous type which is to be seen in many different local forms and variations (at least 15) reflecting design innovations by particular builders or definite regional characteristics. The V-bottom, deadrise form, first seen in the local skiff/bateau vessel type, was later adapted by local boatbuilders for the larger skipjacks, or two-sail bateaux. Thus, these surviving examples of Chesapeake-area skiffs are important in understanding the construction techniques and design innovations still to be seen today in the surviving skipjack fleet. They also were the means of carrying out an important local industry--crabbing, fishing, and oystering.

The motorized Smith Island skiff at the Museum was built at Smith Island in the early 1920's and follows the local type in construction details and overall shape. The skiff has a straight high bow, very shallow draft, and is fore-and-aft planked--characteristics shared by the non-motorized Smith Island skiff also in the Museum's collection. The boat was used for crabbing and oyster tonging in the Smith Island and Hooper Island areas. It was donated to the Museum in 1975 by Harry M. Walsh, author of The Outlaw Gunner.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-524

Howard I. Chapelle, Chesapeake Bay Crabbing Skiffs (St. Michaels, Md: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, n.d.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St. telephone 685-3750

city or town Baltimore state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

T-524
Power Crabbing Skiff (Smith Island Type)
Small Boat Exhibit Shed (T-626)
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
Mill St.
St. Michaels
Saint Michaels Quad.
Talbot Co.





T-524

Smith Island power crabbing
skiff

St. Michaels, Md.

port side (rear vessel)

M.C. Wootton 5/84



T-524

Power crabbing skiff, Smith
Island type
St. Michaels, Md

Port side - stern
A.E. Witty 5/84